

and lay, high and low, all gathered to hear him. One day a woman from the village of Kawamata, Wakae district, Kawachi province 河内國若江郡川派里<sup>2</sup> came to the meeting with a child to hear the teachings. The child fretted and cried so much that she could not hear, and the child could not walk although he was over ten. Fretting and crying, he drank milk and ate incessantly. The venerable master said to her, "Come, my good woman—take your child outside and throw him into the stream!" Hearing that, the congregation whispered, "What causality<sup>3</sup> made such a compassionate sage to speak like that?" But the mother's affection prevented her from abandoning the child; still holding him, she listened to the preaching.

The next day she returned with the child to hear the teachings, and the child again cried so loudly that the audience could not hear. Accusing the mother, the venerable master said to her, "Throw the child into the stream!" Though troubled by doubts, the mother could not stand the loud cries and threw him into the deep stream. The child rose to the surface and, treading water and rubbing his hands together, he stared at her with big shining eyes and said with bitterness, "What a pity! I planned to exploit you by eating for three more years." Bewildered, the mother came back to her seat to hear the preaching. The venerable master asked her, "Did you throw away your child?" Whereupon she told him the whole sequence in detail. Then he explained, "In your previous existence you borrowed his things and did not return them, so he became your child and got back what you owed him by eating. That child was your creditor in your past life."

What a shame! We should not die without paying off our debts. Otherwise we reap the penalty without fail in our future life. Accordingly, the *Shutchō-gyō* says: "Because of a pennyworth debt of salt to the driver he was born as an ox and driven hard to carry a load of salt on his back to make up for his debt by labor."<sup>4</sup> This refers to the same type of thing.

2. Present Kawamata, Fuse, Higashi-ōsaka-shi 東大阪市布施川侯。

3. 因緣。

4. Not an exact quotation but a summary of a passage in the *Shutchō-gyō* (*Taishō*, VI, 425). There were two brothers; one chose to become an arhat, the other remained a layman who would never listen to his brother's preaching. Once the arhat met his brother born as an ox and loaded with burdens. The arhat told the driver of the ox that his brother had been born as an ox because of his debt of salt to the driver.

## 31

### *On the Birth of a Girl with Sari in Her Hand Owing to Her Parents' Vow to Build a Pagoda<sup>1</sup>*

Niu no atae Otokami 丹生直弟上<sup>2</sup> was a man of Iwata district, Tōtōmi province 遠江國磐田郡.<sup>3</sup> Although he made a vow to build a pagoda, he could not fulfill the vow for many years. He always regretted this and tried hard to find a way to do it. In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, a girl was born to Otokami, though he was seventy and his wife was sixty-two. The baby's left hand was clenched. In wonder, the parents tried to open it, but it was clenched more tightly than ever and never opened. Lamenting, they said, "It is a great shame for us to have given untimely birth to a crippled baby. But you are born to us as a result of the work of causality." And they nursed her with great care and never neglected her.

She grew up with fine features. At the age of seven she opened her fist to show it to her mother, saying, "Look at this!" When the mother looked at the child's palm, she found two pieces of *sari*,<sup>4</sup> the sacred ashes of Buddha. In joy and wonder she relayed the news to people everywhere. All were rapturous with joy. Provincial magistrates and district governors rejoiced, organized a devotees' association<sup>5</sup> to build a seven-story pagoda, and enshrined the *sari* in the pagoda during a dedication service. This is the pagoda of Iwata-dera 磐田寺<sup>6</sup> which stands in Iwata district now. At the completion of the pagoda, the child suddenly passed away.

This is what people mean when they say that a vow once made will be achieved and fulfilled without fail.

## 32

### *On Rebirth as an Ox to Make up for the Unpaid Debt of Rice Wine for the Temple Fund<sup>1</sup>*

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, villagers of Mikami, Nagusa dis-

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XII, 2).

2. Unknown.

3. Present Iwata-gun, Shizuoka-ken 静岡縣磐田郡。

4. See Chap. II(2)b, n. 98.

5. 知識 *chishiki*; see Chap. I(1)d.

6. Unidentified.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XX, 22). Similar to I.10, 20; II.9, 15; III.26, etc.